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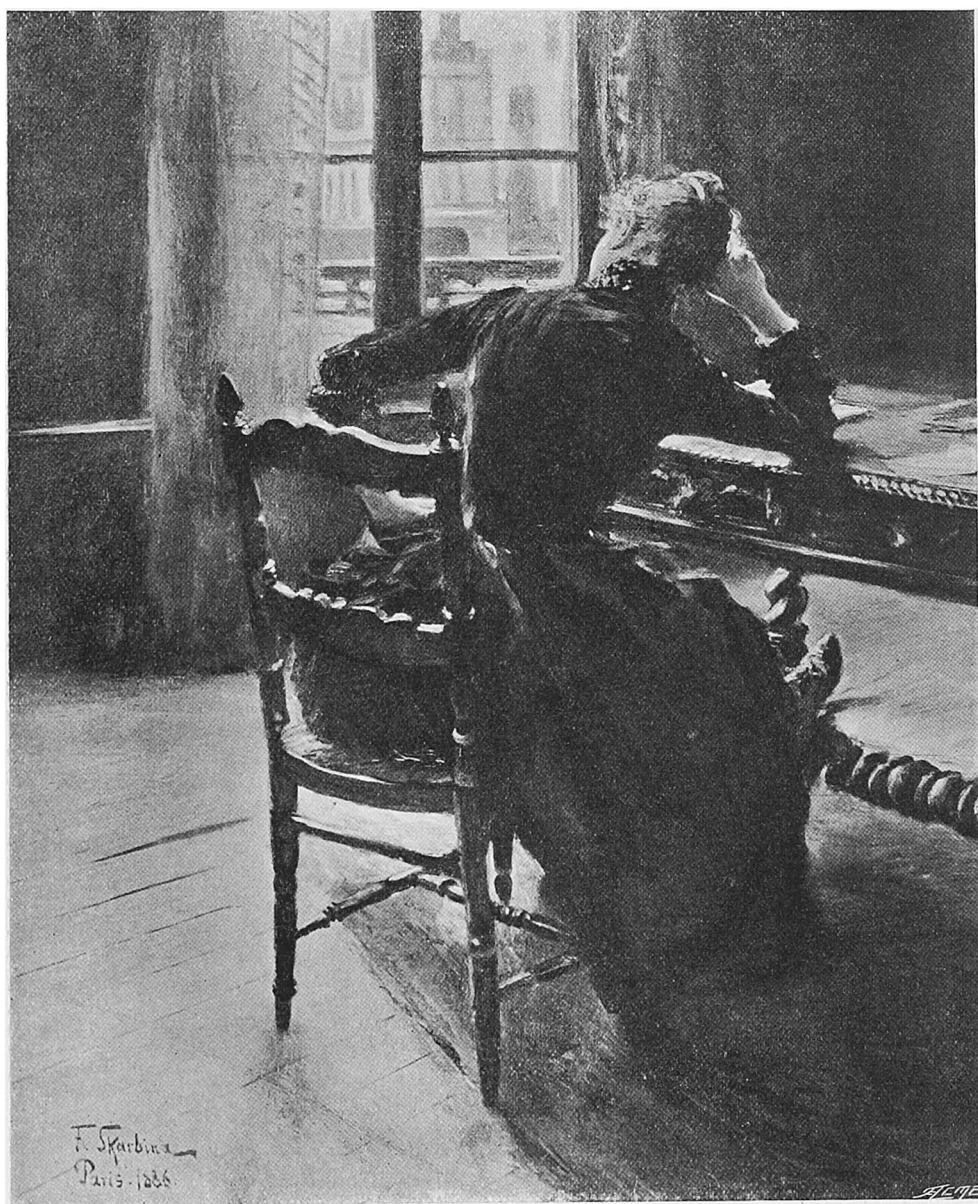
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HOME ARTS AND INDUSTRIES

working at great distances from one another and under various local conditions are more than interesting. They are instructive, particularly to the classes themselves. This variety is one of the most vital points about the exhibition, and it rests with the Association to appoint as judges people who have not only great knowledge, but who are sufficiently broad-minded to appreciate the many different phases of art which find expression in the work sent up for judgment.

Any attempt to bind design down to rules and regulations, from whatever clique they may emanate, always results in dreary respectability, a quality in art the most hateful. As far as the Association is concerned, judges who possess a sympathetic desire to see good wherever they can, are of far more value than those who look for only one form of goodness, and who pass by or condemn anything which does not in some way or other conform to their own personal prejudices.



'LOST IN THOUGHT'
BY F. SKARBINA, BERLIN

BERLIN PAINTERS

PORTRAIT OF A LADY
BY REINHOLD LEPSIUS, 1877
BERLIN



M ODERN BERLIN PAINTERS, BY F. SERVAES

IN Berlin the soil for modern painting is slowly developing. In its rapid growth the town has too many interests outside the sphere of fine arts, interests of a purely practical nature, which prevent her from developing rapidly into a home of the Muses. And where the spirit of the population leans towards art, it is either literature, or the stage, or music, or at least, during the last years, the practical sphere of applied art. Sculpture is in a particularly sad condition. The last generation presented Berlin with a single sculptor's work for exhibition, that could undergo without danger the severe test of critical examination. Especially the marble gallery of the 'Siegesallee,' founded by the present Emperor, contains but too many works whose artistic mediocrity is

painfully disproportionate to the pompousness of their erection.

Yet Berlin has some sculptors of talent, like Kräse-Lietzenburg, Lederer, and Gaul. But they receive little, if any, official notice. And thus there are also a number of clever and even distinguished painters who have been kept down until recently, and many of whom have still to fight a bitter struggle. Only the foundation of the 'Secession' under the leadership of Max Liebermann, a painter well known to the readers of *THE ARTIST*, led to the concentration of the young, promising men of talent and secured them their due position in public life. Until then only isolated attacks had been made, the most important of which was the foundation of the 'League of the XI.' But all this was

SKARBINA

only beneficial to a few, since the movement lacked constancy and vigour.

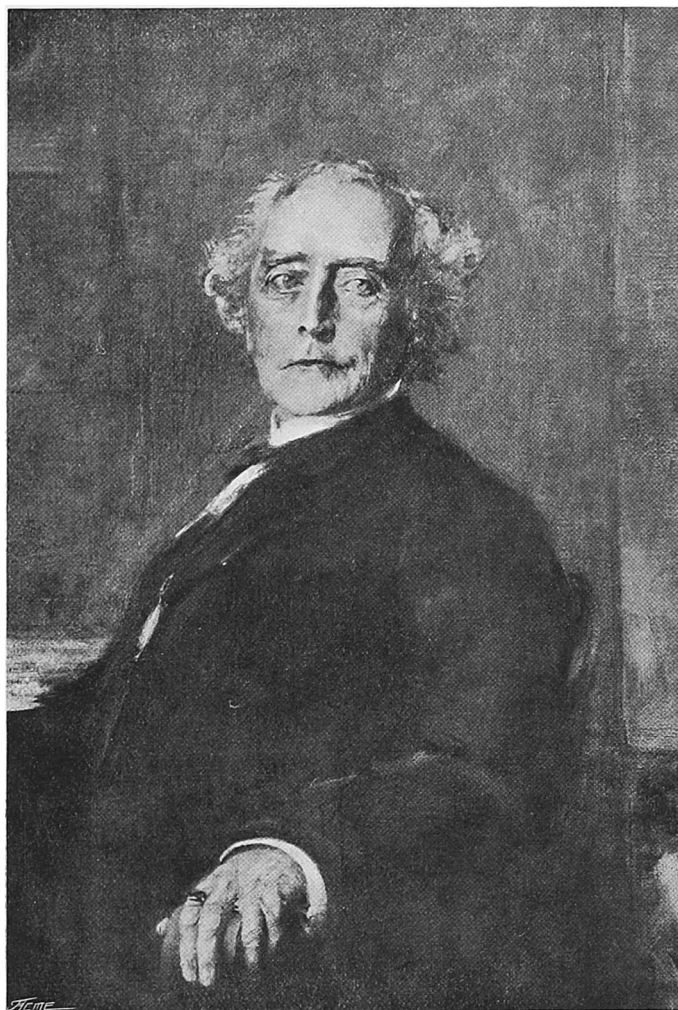
Matters are now beginning to improve, and the time has come when one may speak of modern Berlin painting. It is now possible to deal in a series of articles with its most marked characteristics.

Let us begin with a man who does not by any means belong to the youngest generation, and who has rightly enjoyed fame for some time back : Franz Skarbina (born in Berlin, 1849). This artist is surprisingly versatile. There is no phase of modern painting which he has not tried with success. At the age of 29 he first attracted public attention with a large sensational picture. He had painted the Berlin Morgue, and among all the corpses a would-be suicide, who with a rope round his neck returns to life and looks around with

amazement and horror. Two paths were opened to Skarbina by this picture. He could either continue painting huge, sensational canvases, that would have been sent touring round the world and formed the topic of the day, but *only* of the day, in every town, or he could cultivate that subtlety of observation of light and transition, revealed by this first work, and continue to work out the problems of modern painting. He chose the second path—more glorious, but also more difficult. And thus

he became one of the finest painters of light Germany can boast of. Changing from subject to subject, full of variety in technique, he has remained true to himself in that one point—hence his great success. Say he paints a scene from a novel : two lovers of the Empire period.

Whilst the public will be attracted by the subject matter, the expert will be fascinated by the treatment of the light which floods through a broad window from the left, is reflected from the parquet floor, covers the back wall with little spots, and shines in delicate strokes on furniture and picture-frames. Skarbina has always striven to improve, and did not even as a mature man disdain to seek instruction from some of the great Paris artists. He has, therefore, been reproached with being too 'Parisian,' but he did not shrink from continuing the



PROFESSOR ERNST CURTIUS
BY REINHOLD LEPSIUS, BERLIN

technique acquired in Paris, and to utilise the excellent Paris models and motives for his pictures. To blame the artist for this is narrow-minded and ridiculous. Whatever he learnt in Paris he turned to account afterwards in his native town, in his numerous pictures of Berlin street-life and Berlin interiors. In fact, he has been among the first to give artistic expression to the type of the Berlin woman. He has also tried to extract some kind of modest, pictorial charm, from the Prussian landscape, *f.i.*, from the much-abused



PORTRAIT OF A CHILD
BY SABINE LEPSIUS, BERLIN

Grünewald, and he has even created a patriotic picture in his *Glimpse from the Emperor William's Window*.

Subject-matter, however, grew less and less important to Skarbina. He rightly laid more stress on the purely pictorial element and did not shrink from themes the subject of which might be repulsive. Thus he depicted once in a series of paintings the vault of the Berlin garrison church, showing in open coffins the decomposing corpses of Frederick the Great's officers. The phosphorescent shine in that pale, dark vault, struggling with the yellow candle light, tempted the artist, and fearlessly he followed up

with all his energy and subtlety of observation the first problems of light that offered themselves to him in this instance. Consequently such pictures are most characteristic for the artist, as are neutral in subject matter, but enlivened by a profuse and varying play of light and shadow, like, for instance, the picture *Lost in Thought*, reproduced in the present number of *THE ARTIST*. If he understands clearly to express the distribution of light in an interior, he can also represent natural light under an open sky, say, the pale, delicate light of snow, and in it a darkly dressed figure; or the waning light of evening, evenly distributed over a wide plain, and in it—

seen in an almost visionary way—the mighty figure of a mower, returning to his home, with the scythe on his shoulder. But Skarbina has a special weakness for the late hour, when the lamps are already lit and reflected in the canal or in pools of rain water, and when fine lines of light are thrown on the wheels and metal fittings of passing vehicles. He is particularly happy in his large painting, *All Souls Day*, where he places the artificial light of burning candles into the natural light of a late afternoon, thus obtaining a curious and interesting contrast.

Very different from Skarbina's astonishing versatility, which makes his personality appear somewhat vague and undefined, is the strong concentration which appears in the work of another Berlin artist, Reinhold Lepsius (born 1857). He is the son of the celebrated Egyptologist Lepsius, and has devoted himself entirely to portraiture. It would almost appear as if he only considers highly intellectual people and sensitive souls to be worthy subjects for his brush. At any rate, all the portraits which he exposes to the public gaze bear the stamp of inherent aristocracy of the spirit, which raises them considerably above the level of ordinary portrait painting. If this inclination connects Lepsius with Lenbach, he differs from him considerably by his particular individuality and by the style of his pictorial rendering. Lenbach's aim is the forcible, heroic, imposing, and he does not shrink from a certain brutality if he wishes to express historic grandeur. He paints, so to say, only men of force and power.

Lepsius, on the other hand, paints aristocrats in the sense of Henrik Ibsen—aristocrats of sentiment, of nerves, and of intellect; men who carry in their blood a strong tradition of culture, and who look upon life with light Hellenic eyes, more contemplative than active, their souls already a little tired. And the exterior artistic character of these pictures harmonizes with this inner feeling. Far from the imposing gold-glitter, borrowed by Lenbach from the galleries of old masters, Lepsius prefers a tender, delicate, subdued, silvery grey, from which the subject of the portrait stands out softly, and yet decided. But it would be wrong to think that the artist follows a certain recipe, and paints, say, in the manner of Whistler. He is independent,

makes his arrangements according to the individuality of the sitter, and stands well within the borders of good German tradition. Of course, he has learnt much from Whistler, notably the tasteful combination of tones. But his contrasts are stronger, his elaboration of details more decided and reliable. He does not only wish to render some pictorial impression of a personality, but a psychological description by pictorial means.

Among Lepsius's works, I must mention, in the first place, some excellent portraits of *servants*, like those of his father, of G. Ebers, and the one of Ernst Curtius, which is reproduced in *THE ARTIST*. But he is also a refined painter of ladies' portraits, who knows how to express loveliness and gentleness and dreamy thoughts, as well as roguish gracefulness. In this direction the artist has a dangerous competitor in his wife. Sabine Lepsius, a daughter of the well-known painter Graef, has, however, not carried this competition beyond the stage of noble rivalry, and one might well say that the friendly harmony of this artistic couple is demonstrated by the complete unity of their artistic convictions. Sabine Lepsius shows, as portraitist, the same characteristics as Reinhold Lepsius, but she replaces her husband's searching penetration by boldness and freshness. She does not carry characterisation quite so far, but she gives more decision to those features which have not escaped her observation.

(To be continued.)

ART CENTRES.

LONDON NICO JUNGSMANN'S EXHIBITION

THE Exhibitions of Nico Jungsmann's 'Picturesque Holland' at the Dowdeswell galleries are by way of becoming a regular feature of the London Art season, and we know of but few artists the annual return of whose work deserves to be more heartily welcomed, his pictures having all the qualities to secure the admiration of his brother artists, whilst their beauty is, at